DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 636 IR 050 602

TITLE	Parliamentary Libraries Section. General Research Libraries Division. Papers.
INSTITUTION	International Federation of Library Associations, The Hague (Netherlands).
PUB DATE	Aug 83
NOTE	33p.; Papers presented at the Annual Conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (49th, Munich, West Germany, August 21-27, 1983).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Foreign Countries; *Government Libraries; *Government Publications; *Information Dissemination; *International Organizations; International Programs; Library Acquisition; Library Associations; Library Collections; Library Cooperation; Library Research; *Library Services; Microfilm; Program Descriptions; Videodisc Recordings; *Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS	Access to Information; *International Centre Parliamentary Documentation

ABSTRACT

Papers on parliamentary and legislative libraries, which were presented at the 1983 International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) conference, include: (1) "Need for and Use of Parliamentary Papers," a report by Eeva-Maija Tammekann on the results of a 1983 survey of 37 parliamentary libraries (with a 51% response rate) covering types of documents considered to fall within the scope of parliamentary papers, the extent of library acquisitions, the replacement of printed publications by microfilm, storage of publications, and access to and use of publications; (2) "The Use of Video in Parliamentary Libraries," in which Michael R. Mann describes applications for videotapes and videodiscs in the parliamentary library situation, covering videorecording of parliamentary proceedings, off-air recording of televised broadcasts, acquisition of externally produced video programs, and in-house production of video programs; and (3) "Parliaments and Information Dissemination: The Role of Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation and the International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation (CIDP) in Strengthening Parliamentary Institutions through Documentation and Dissemination of Information," in which Subhash C. Kashyap describes CIDP scope, development, library and documentation services, research and publications, organization of international symposia and meetings, and technical cooperation programs. (ESR)

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General Conference, Munich, West Germany, August 21-27, 1983
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47-PAR-2-E

EEVA-MAIJA TAMMEKANN

Need for and use of parliamentary papers

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EEVA-MAIJA TAMMEKANN

THE NEED FOR AND USE OF PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS

The IFLA section for parliamentary libraries distributed a questionnaire in early 1983, with the aim of charting the extent and use of parliamentary papers within parliamentary libraries.

Questionnaire forms were sent to 37 libraries. Replies were received from a total of 19, for a 51% response. The replies were broken down as follows: all the Nordic countries with the exception of Iceland, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, France, and Great Britain; Italy and Greece; Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary; Kenya, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

Although the response percentage was only modest, the survey can probably be said to give a reliable picture of the situation, in view of the fact that those replying represented different types of library from almost all the continents.

Those questioned were asked to define what they understood by the concept of parliamentary papers. The following kinds of documents were unanimously considered to fall within the scope of parliamentary papers:

- Reports of debates, either of plenary sessions or within parliamentary committees
- The minutes of proceedings of Parliament
- Government proposals, bills
- Reports of parliamentary committees arising out of government proposals, recommendations
- Reports and statements presented to Parliament
- Members' questions and initiatives
- Directories of parliamentary papers
- Catalogues and registers of parliamentary representatives or members; guides for the practical work of Parliament

Differences of interpretation occurred over the extent to which the following publications could be described as parliamentary papers:

- Background material for government proposals taken generally, for instance the reports of government-appointed committees (not all Parliaments carry out extensive research or explanatory work)
- Background material for the workings of Parliament, in the form of agreements, reports, etc. by international organizations
- Collections of uncommented law texts
- Publications presenting returns and results
- Studies into the history of, and operating methods of Parliament
- Publications by political parties

The IFLA survey sought to throw light on the following points:

- The extent of acquisitions
- The replacement of printed publications by microfilm
- Storage of publications
- Access to and use of publications
- Guidance in the use of parliamentary publications

A total of 320 series of parliamentary papers were received by the 19 libraries replying; the numbers taken by individual libraries varied between 3 and 33 series. The majority of libraries took material from 15-25 countries. Federal states were for this purpose defined as countries.

The great majority of the publication series taken by libraries originated from the continent in which the library in question was situated. The numbers of those received from neighbouring or near-neighbouring countries were roughly matched by those arriving from other continents. It was noted that geographical proximity often has less significance than historical or cultural connections or similarities in legislative structure and procedure.

Approximately one-third of the parliamentary papers received were in English, with an equivalent number in languages other than English, French, German, Spanish, or Russian. According to those replying, only few document series were in Spanish or Russian. It can thus be seen that parliamentary libraries

take and store a relatively large number of documents in languages which are "exotic" from their point of view. By far the most common means of acquisition was via international exchange, with very few papers actually being bought by libraries.

It was more common to receive papers in fascicles than in the form of bound volumes, although more often than not a combination of the two was used. Microform publications, on the other hand, were encountered only in a few cases. Answers to the question: "Would you prefer microforms to printed publications?" were split roughly down the middle; half of the libraries taking part stated that they would prefer the former, and half felt that printed publications were nevertheless a better solution. Among the negative aspects of microforms put forward by respondents was the fact that they could not be read by M.P.s in trains, aeroplanes, or at home, etc.

Microforms were seen as an attractive proposition in the case of publications likely to be little used, either on the grounds of language, age, or the fact that they come from countries having only peripheral importance as far as the receiver-library is concerned. Some respondents reported that they initially take publications in printed form, and subsequently transfer them to microfilm. This process requires that the publications in question be published in two forms.

In most cases, questions of acquisition policy are decided by the Chief Librarian. The greater part of those parliamentary papers acquired by libraries are kept permanently. In only a few cases are they destroyed or discarded after a period of 2-10 years.

Many respondents gave no answer to the question: "Do you handle all categories of parliamentary papers in the same way?". Of those who did give an answer, most reported that they dealt with all material in the same fashion, while some stated that they made more detailed catalogues of the papers of certain given countries.

Somewhat more than 2/3 of the parliamentary papers were said to be kept in book stacks, some 20% in stores outside the library premises, and only a

small number were actually on the reading-room shelves. This can be taken as some indication that the use of these documents is not very great. In most cases, the parliamentary papers of the own country were widely used, with little use made of documents from other countries, irrespective of whether the other countries concerned were near-neighbourgs or came from other continents.

The four countries whose parliamentary papers were most used were Great Britain (12 mentions), the Federal Republic of Germany (8), the United States (8), and France (8). In addition to these, a further 24 other countries were mentioned as being popular. The reasons for this "most favoured nation" status are quite clear: either close geographical proximity or historical and political factors (the Nordic countries use one another's documents; the countries of the Commonwealth use documents from Great Britain, and vice versa). Another factor bearing on use was similarities in the legislation of the countries concerned. With the exception of Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the U.S., practically all the countries mentioned were classed as being little used - this was often the case, for example, for all the Nordic countries. The reasons are probably chiefly linguistic, although large geographical distances play a part.

No useful data was obtained from the question: "Are there technical reasons why the papers from some countries are more frequently used than others?". Reasons given included fast delivery, useful registers, and complete collections, but these were not actually thought to have any great importance attached to them. Technical reasons cited as hindering or discouraging the use of documents from some countries included incomplete collections, a long time-lag (the papers can be up to three years out of date on arrival), and impractical or inadequate registers.

Answers to the question of who exactly is interested in using parliamentary papers showed that researchers and students were the most active group, both in respect of the papers of the home country and those of neighbouring and even distant countries. They were followed by the politicians themselves, with the category "Others" in third place. Students and research workers showed roughly equal interest in domestic and foreign papers, while the poli-

ticians very seldom paid much attention to documents emanating from countries far removed from the receiver-country. The media in general was not regarded as having a great deal of interest in parliamentary papers. Use-guidance in the use of such documents was provided in roughly half of the libraries taking part in the survey.

The data acquired through the questionnaire are not altogether comparable, since there are differences to be found between the positions of the countries concerned, the parliamentary procedures they follow, and the functions of the libraries themselves. It is quite obvious that in federal states, and in states which are either part of political or economic blocs or which enjoy a high degree of economic intercourse with one another, the parliamentary papers of other states of the confederation, or those of partners and allies, must have a considerable importance. Some of those replying intimated that the publications and documents of international organizations were at least as important as parliamentary papers. In the event that a country has two or even more official languages, then its parliamentary papers accordingly swell in volume. There are differences between the parliamentary ways of working in various countries; for example, in some cases much more wide-ranging reports and studies are made, while in others there is greater reliance on the background material gathered for governmental proposals. There are similar disparities between the position and role of parliamentary libraries in different countries; if the library in question is intended solely for the internal use of Parliament, then in the building up of its collections it cannot - and indeed need not - pay the same degree of attention to the gathering of parliamentary papers from abroad, as compared with a library which has a national responsibility for making available such material for use in the country as a whole.

The availability for use of such papers may also be subject to factors or authorities outside the parliamentary sphere. Attention was paid to the fact that exchange arrangements may sometimes be stopped, refused, or hindered by the action of government printers of other government agencies which are presumably beyond the control of the exchange partner libraries.

A number of solutions were put forward for improvements to the present situation, i.e. the realisation of savings in space, manpower, and handling and postage costs while at the same time ensuring that availability is not reduced:

- international cooperation in the acquisition and recording of parliamentary papers
- the implementation of the UAP (universal availability of publications) such that the parliamentary papers of any given country could speedily be made available from that country's libraries, for example via interlibrary lending
- the publication of documents chiefly in the form of microfilms, etc. This suggestion is open to argument, as one could ask whether microform publications fulfil the democratic right of all citizens to access to the papers in question
- the selection by each parliamentary library of a small number of the most significant papers emanating from its own Parliament, and the immediate dispatch of these to other libraries
- rapid notification of the most significant reports, and supply of a copy on request
- the eventual introduction of a central database and the use of SDI, and
- the recording and upkeep of parliamentary papers solely in the form of EDP registers, from which hard-copy printouts could be made as and when necessary (again, this solution brings up the issue of whether material in this form answers the public's justified claims for the universal availability of such information).

The discussion will also consider the question of what exactly is the use of and need for parliamentary papers. Applications include the following:

- the use of foreign parliamentary papers as a means of comparing domestic parliamentary and legislative practices with those used elsewhere
- as a source of reference in federal states, political or economic blocs (such as the European Community), and in countries working closely in cooperation with each other (e.g. the countries of the Nordic Council), since in cases such as these the domestic legislative process is clearly dependent on that prevailing in certain other states or countries
- as a source of background material for research into the history, politics, or law of the country concerned.

see page 7 !

IFLA 1983

IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE MUNICH 1983

Division: General Research Libraries

Section: Parliamentary Libraries

74-PAR-3-E

The Use of Video in Parliamentary Libraries

Michael R. Mann

Assistant Librarian

European Parliament

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The Use of Video in Parliamentary Libraries

Michael R. Mann
European Parliament

In providing parliamentarians with information, parliamentary libraries have relied very heavily, in the past, on the printed word. It is not difficult to imagine, however, that certain types of inquiries may be answered more effectively by using audiovisual materials as well.

The preliminary findings of a recent survey on video recordings in parliamentary assemblies, carried out by Anthony Reid of the European Parliament, have indicated that video, although by no means widespread in use, is recognized as being an important development in national parliaments and their respective libraries. Even those libraries not presently involved in any of the various video applications have demonstrated an interest in its future utilization.

Video, for the purposes of this paper, is defined as the means whereby visual and aural information can be recorded, stored and played back as required. The scope of the paper, therefore, will include discussion of videotape and videodisc and their implications for parliamentary libraries. It will not, however, be concerned with such developments as videotex and teletext whereby textual and graphic information is transmitted from a central point to domestic television sets either on a two-way interactive basis (videotex) or a one-way system (teletext).

Although I shall tend to concentrate on videotape (this being the most widely used medium), it is worthwhile making the distinction between it

and videodisc and, where necessary, comparing the two technologies when considering their implementation in the library environment. Videotape uses a magnetic tape for recording visual and sound information. This tape may be housed in a variety of formats including open reel, cartridge and, more commonly, cassette. Despite the lack of standardization between the many videotape systems, videotape offers considerable flexibility. Production of video programmes using video cameras, off-air recording of televised broadcasts, playback of commercially produced videotapes are all possible applications. In addition, the standardization problem is greatly alleviated by the facility of being able to transfer information on one videotape format to another. Videodisc (or, more correctly, optical disc), also lacking complete standardization, is the visual equivalent of the gramophone record. It does not (yet) have the versatility of videotape and relies heavily on the production of pre-recorded videodisc programmes. Discs, unlike tapes, cannot be edited, erased or re-recorded.

Video is an audiovisual medium which is being exploited in school, academic, special and public library environments and is gaining acceptance as a normal part of the information package. Many public libraries, for example, highlight this point by maintaining integrated collections and/or catalogues. Thus the library user is made aware of all available formats on a particular subject. Similarly, teachers requiring information on a given topic are accustomed to receiving that information in all types of media formats from their school libraries or resources centres. They recognize that audiovisual materials can not only complement the monograph collection, but also that, in some instances, they may actually prove more beneficial in the learning situation. Video in the parliamentary environment serves both the archival and the information function. As an example of the information aspect, it

is not difficult to see how the recording of relevant programmes from televised broadcasting is not very different from photocopying newspaper or periodical articles and making them available to library users.

By breaking down videc applications into four main areas we can see its potential in the parliamentary situation and also gain some perspective of the versatility of the medium. These four areas I see as follows:

1) Videorecording of parliamentary proceedings
2) Off-air recording of televised broadcasts
3) Acquisition of externally produced video programmes
4) In-house production of video programmes.

1) Videorecording of parliamentary proceedings

The videorecording of parliamentary proceedings should be seen as an extension of the existing methods of reporting parliamentary activities. Like the sound recording, it provides an immutable record of events. Furthermore, it portrays the atmosphere of the House, catches moments of emotion more effectively than any official written report and can capture comments, actions, etc., which may never find their way into the written report. It is, by its nature, more selective in coverage than sound recording, being able to concentrate on one shot only at any given time. Some critics of the televising of Parliament have argued that this limitation gives a distorted view of parliamentary life.

As an example of developments in this area, the European Parliament now gives video coverage to approximately 40% of its plenary sessions. Some committee meetings are also recorded. The European Parliament, somewhat of an exception among parliamentary institutions, bases this 40% on the wishes of the national television companies from the member States of the European Communities. The Parliament's audiovisual unit, which is responsible for the recording operations, makes copies available to these companies (in the required tape format) and also allows them free access to the Chamber if desired. The amount of use made of videotapes by Members is minimal.

In national parliaments the task of recording may be carried out by the parliament's own audiovisual unit, by an independent agency or by a national television company. It is also conceivable that a joint approach may be adopted. If, as in the case of the European Parliament, much of

the work is effected by the audiovisual unit, it seems logical that that unit should have complete control of the recording, storage, retrieval and replication of its tapes. The archival function is fulfilled by the fact that, although copies of tapes can be made for viewing or lending purposes, the master tapes never leave the unit.

For these reasons and also the considerable technical factors, it is unlikely that the parliamentary library will be involved to any great extent in this particular application of video. In addition, the availability and distribution of videorecordings will be appreciably less than that of the official written reports of parliaments. It is also apparent that, because of high production costs, the videodisc will not penetrate the videorecording of parliaments in the near future.

2) Off-air recording of televised broadcasts

One of the features of the videorecorder is its ability to record televised broadcasts directly onto videotape. This asset has proved to be a most profitable factor in the home video market and it is clear that such a facility has important implications for the parliamentary information service.

According to the survey mentioned at the beginning of this paper, only a few parliaments, e.g. Australian, Canadian, Norwegian and Finnish, are exploiting this aspect of videorecording. The advantages appear to be threefold. Firstly, programmes can be recorded following specific requests from Members, research assistants, etc. Secondly, recording of programmes such as news broadcasts, 'Today in Parliament', can be carried out on a regular daily basis and thirdly, by scanning television guides, staff are able to plan which programmes should be recorded each week. In all these cases an SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) exercise or current awareness service would inform Members of which programmes were available for viewing and/or loan.

It is clear that this rather labour-intensive work would greatly enhance the output of the press-cuttings service by adding a new dimension to its work. Television, either as a chronicler of historical events or as a form of investigative journalism, can now be captured in the same way that newspapers can be photocopied.

One influencing factor concerning videorecording is the number of television channels which are available in different countries. Whatever the present situation, it is bound to become more complicated with the develop-

ment of cable television and satellite broadcasting. Both will increase the amount of potentially recordable material and, in the case of satellite broadcasting, allow access to foreign transmissions.

Leaving aside the problem of copyright for the moment, perhaps the most pertinent question is that of responsibility for recording. Should it be undertaken by the library, its press-cuttings service or the audiovisual unit (if one exists)? In deciding, it is important to consider such points as the technical aspect, the nature of the recorded material and the way it will be exploited.

As a final point on off-air recording, it should be stressed that sound recording of radio broadcasts has been possible for many years and one wonders whether a service, similar to that outlined above, has been offered in the past to Members. To a large extent, of course, transcripts can take the place of sound recordings; they cannot, however, be acceptable substitutes for video recordings. Even so, it may be that we need to look more closely at the potential of sound recording before attempting the video approach.

3) Acquisition of externally produced video programmes

One aspect of video which is likely to involve the parliamentary library more than any other is the acquisition of commercially and other externally produced video programmes. This section covers not only the selection, ordering and cataloguing processes but also other considerations such as storage, shelving policy and equipment.

Video producers are essentially publishers and, generally speaking, the acquisition of video materials is not very different from that of monograph items. The selection aids which are available, however, tend to be less well organized than those for books; audiovisual materials are rarely treated comprehensively in national bibliographies. In addition, video has its own equivalent of the more elusive grey literature. Nevertheless, various selection aids and supply sources do exist, particularly in the English language, although they are usually of a general nature, covering all types of audiovisual materials and not always devoted specifically to video. They include publishers' catalogues, videographies, specialist journals, catalogues from organizations and other libraries specializing in audiovisual materials and new title information from educational institutions, voluntary organizations and pressure groups.

If we adopt the philosophy that audiovisual materials are different from monographs only in format, then the selection policy will be similar in both instances. One discussion point, which is worth raising here, is whether Members have the time to use video materials, remembering that they have to be viewed in real-time and that browsing is not easily possible as in the case of the printed word.

The only real problem, as far as ordering is concerned, is that publishers are often reluctant to send items on approval. This highlights the value of reviews as aids to selection. Also, of course, the videotape format must be compatible with the library's video equipment.

The cataloguing of video has become more manageable in recent years with the introduction of rules for audiovisual materials. The second edition of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) seeks to treat monographs and other materials alike and the International Standard Bibliographic Description (General) offers a common approach to all documents regardless of format. This is an important point when considering the possibility of integrated library catalogues and the interchange of bibliographical information on audiovisual materials.

Before any video items arrive in the library, three important decisions have to be taken regarding storage, arrangement and utilization. Indeed, after considering these points, along with wider issues, a further decision may need to be taken on integrated and non-integrated collections. This in turn, may mean the development of the parliamentary media library.

Videocassettes are packaged in such a way that they can be shelved very easily with the book collection. On the other hand, manufacturers do offer recommendations for storage, e.g. optimum temperature, relative humidity, which may determine where the video items should best be located. The provision of viewing facilities may also affect the decision to have a separate video area.

Videodisc, although of potential future interest to parliamentary libraries,

is still in its infancy when compared to videotape. The information contained on videodisc falls into one of two categories; either it is of a recreational nature intended for the consumer market or it is information which takes advantage of the large storage capacity of videodisc and which, until now, has been stored on microforms, etc.

4) In-house production of video programmes

In addition to making videorecordings of parliamentary proceedings, the audiovisual unit may be actively involved in producing in-house video programmes. These programmes may have various applications. They may be used for public relations, e.g. a programme for schools on Parliament, or for internal purposes such as a video programme for new Members and staff introducing them to the library and information services. There is also the possibility that video could be employed in research, offering reports, etc., on videotape instead of or as well as the written form. These would be similar to the audiovisual research productions of the Congressional Research Service. Any such productions could then be included in the library collection along with externally produced items and off-air recordings.

Before concluding this rather brief overview of the use of video in parliamentary libraries, it is necessary to discuss the problem of copyright and the question of inter-parliamentary library cooperation. Laws of copyright are difficult to interpret even in the national setting, let alone in the international context. For our purposes, however, two points should be considered. These are the copyright laws relating to off-air recording of televised broadcasts and the copying of videotape. Bearing in mind the special relationship which exists between national parliaments and national broadcasting associations, it is unlikely that permission to make off-air recordings would be refused. Hopefully this arrangement would be extended to the international setting, whereby programmes emanating from one country could be recorded in another. Problems of copyright will affect not only the introduction of video in parliamentary libraries but also potential inter-library cooperation. In addition, cooperation between parliamentary libraries will be influenced by other factors such as differences in national technical standards and developments in satellite broadcasting, videodisc and even microvideotape.

I hope this paper has helped to clarify some of the many applications and problems relating to the use of video in parliamentary libraries. It is clear that both videotape and videodisc will play a part in these libraries in the not too distant future. Parliamentarians, themselves members of the consumer market, will become increasingly familiar with video as a medium and will, doubtless, come to expect it in their working environment.

IFLA 1983

IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE MUNICH 1983

Division: Special Libraries

Section: Parliamentary Libraries

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PARLIAMENTS AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The role of inter-parliamentary co-operation and the International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation (CIDP) in strengthening parliamentary institutions through documentation and dissemination of information

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SUBHASH C. KASHYAP*

PARLIAMENTS AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

'Information Dissemination' involves gathering, organizing and, may be, also processing and analysing information, storing it in easily retrievable form and making it available promptly and in readily usable form to those who need it or to whom it is proposed to be communicated. All this may be done through techniques and tools - manual, mechanical or electronic - that may be available or that may be deemed most appropriate. The purpose is to manage the flow of information on a chosen field in a manner designed to help the user get relevant information, as and when required or targetted. (1)

'Parliaments and Information Dissemination' may mean dissemination of information

- to Parliaments
- by Parliaments
- between Parliaments, or
- about Parliaments.

Information is crucial to Parliaments. As the supreme deliberative and law-making bodies for their respective countries, Parliaments must have unrestrained access to information. They have an inalienable right to be informed. To debate, discuss and decide, Parliaments need information that is timely, truthful and full.

If Governments are answerable to their Parliaments and must provide them the information they require or ask for, Parliaments themselves are answerable to the peoples they represent, and cannot hope to survive for long if the latter are not kept informed by them. For, every people have a right to be kept informed by their Parliament. The new communication technology has radically transformed many things but not the central position of Parliament itself as a powerful medium for information dissemination. Situated between the people and the Government, as they are, the Parliament and the parliamentarians constitute the best communication linkage between them.

Faced with a myriad common problems, Parliaments have much to share and learn from each other's experience and knowledge. To discuss possible solutions to their problems, parliamentarians wish to know how similar problems are handled in other countries or by other Parliaments.

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* Dr. Kashyap is the Head of the International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva. The views, if any, expressed in this paper are however personal and should not be attributed to the CIDP or the IPU.

There is, therefore, a growing need in Parliaments for information regarding other countries and for comparative analysis as the basis for decision-making. Exchange of information between Parliaments assumes considerable importance in this context. (2)

The question of dissemination of information about Parliaments is, however, of the most decisive importance for the future of parliamentary institutions all over the world. No people can be taken for granted even by their Parliament. The image and the continued acceptability and appreciation of the institution depends upon what the people know about it - its structure, ways of functioning, activities, achievements, members etc. Dissemination of information about Parliaments could contribute greatly to bringing them closer to their peoples and to strengthening the parliamentary institutions generally.

For dissemination of objective and unbiased information, the best mechanism thus far developed anywhere is that of Library and Research, Documentation and Information Services (LARDIS) - with whatever name called - set up and controlled by the concerned Parliaments themselves. Not all Parliaments, however, can afford to have well-equipped LARDIS suitably manned by high quality and well-trained professionals - librarians, information scientists, subject and area specialists, etc. The problem is particularly acute in several of the new and developing countries. For, while it is now generally recognized that information is the most vital resource for development and the information needs of legislators in developing countries are the most urgent and vital to their effective functioning, it is precisely they who lack the necessary resources for the purpose. In other words, those who need it most can least afford it. Hence the need for international assistance and co-operation and the relevance of an international organization taking up the task. (3)

Perhaps, it is not known as widely as it should be that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the oldest international political organisation in the field of inter-parliamentary relations. Founded in 1889, it has now existed for nearly a hundred years and survived the two World Wars. National Parliamentary Groups from nearly one hundred (ninety-eight to be exact) countries of the world are at present members of the Union. The fundamental objectives of the Union are twofold:

- development and strengthening of parliamentary institutions with a view to improving their working and enhancing their prestige

- advancement of the work of international peace and co-operation.

Here, we are concerned with the first of these objectives. In the early 1960s when in many countries of the world, political, parliamentary and academic circles were discussing and talking about the 'decline of Parliaments', the IPU came forward with a most constructive approach and a stand of far-reaching consequence. It found that comparative data in regard to Parliaments was sorely lacking and felt that detailed and methodical study of the structure and life of parliamentary institutions and dissemination of information about them would be the most effective way of strengthening them and increasing their prestige. This was proposed to be

achieved through the instrument of the new International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation (CIDP) which was finally set up in 1965 after a gestation period of some 2-3 years. (4)

In 1971, a long-term plan of action for CIDP activities during 1972-80 was finalized. It was based on the premise that it was "necessary and urgent for the Union to play an increasingly active and effective role" in respect of strengthening of parliamentary institutions. The plan envisaged a series of activities designed to further dissemination of information regarding the working of parliamentary institutions in different parts of the world and to contribute to the strengthening of their infra-structures. The proposed activities included :

(a) sustained improvements in documentation work and supplying of information in response to enquiries,

(b) specialized studies on subjects of parliamentary interest,

(c) organization of a series of international symposia on parliamentary topics and

(d) establishment of a technical co-operation and training programme with funding from UN bodies.

CIDP activities during the year 1972-82 were carried on broadly in accordance with this plan.

As at present constituted, the CIDP is an integral organ of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It is guided in its work by an international Consultative Committee of Experts. It endeavours to achieve its foundational objectives by

- systematically collecting, arranging, analysing and disseminating information on national Parliaments - their structure, composition, functions, processes and procedures - in a comparative perspective;

- undertaking the preparation and publication of comparative studies on Parliaments and their problems;

- attempting to bring together parliamentarians, academics, experts, senior civil servants and others with a view to cross-fertilization of ideas and perspectives on parliamentary institutions and their working;

- helping the Parliaments particularly of developing countries with expert assistance, training programmes etc. to improve their infra-structures.

The current activities of the CIDP may be grouped accordingly, under four broad heads:

- Library and Documentation,

- Research and Publications,

- International Symposia and Meetings, and

- Assistance to Parliaments and Technical Co-operation.

Library and Documentation

The first set of CIDP tools and services consists of its Library collections, catalogues and reference materials developed over the years. The Library is necessarily small in size and limited in scope but highly specialized in its field, i.e. parliamentary political science, comparative constitutional law and legislative studies. Its present holdings include such diverse materials as texts of constitutions, electoral laws and treaties, studies, monographs, reports, theses, periodical articles, bibliographies, abstracts and indices. The Library constantly adds to its collections through systematic acquisition of new titles - mainly in English and French - within its subject areas. It also receives a certain number of books as gifts. Regular contacts are maintained with international organizations, universities, relevant research institutes etc. for exchange of publications and collection of latest documents and information in regard to them. Card catalogues by authors, titles and subjects are maintained. The classification system adopted is U.D.C. The subject catalogue includes also analytical entries giving references to especially interesting chapters in books, to periodical articles indexed in the Library, texts of official documents etc. This is particularly valuable for investigations carried out by the CIDP staff and the outside researchers using the Library. All newly acquired materials are also recorded in the Library's List of Books and Articles catalogued which is issued every year and sent free of charge to a large number of addresses, including parliamentary libraries, universities, institutes and specialized libraries in the areas of constitutional law and political science.

The second - and perhaps the more important - set of the CIDP tools and services consists of its various documentation files and reference folders. Folders are maintained in respect of all the countries of the world, particularly those having Parliaments i.e. some kind of a legislative body apart from the executive. So far as possible, each country folder includes separate files on

- Constitutions and constitutional developments, amendments etc.;

- Electoral systems, election laws, rules and regulations, electoral developments, changes in laws, rules etc., general elections to the national legislature and results thereof;

- Parliamentary procedure: Rules of Procedure/Standing orders of (the Houses of) Parliament (Texts relating to the organisation, administration, composition and powers of Parliament (and/or Houses thereof) and the position of its members - their privileges, immunities, remunerations etc.);

- Recent parliamentary developments;

- Parliamentary Libraries, Research, Reference, Documentation and Information Services.

The CIDP collects data also on specific aspects of the activities of Parliaments by conducting international enquiries, either on its own initiative or in response to requests received. Within the limitations of its manpower and other resources, the Centre offers its library and documentation facilities and services and its skills and fund of information freely to all those interested. The books, documents and data are available to all those who wish to consult them at its headquarters. The Centre also endeavours to give as full replies as possible to all requests for information on specialized bibliographies which it receives from all over the world - from parliaments, parliamentarians, academics, universities, institutes, individual scholars and researchers or just plain citizens of any country. There have been occasions when the comparative documentation available at the Centre was utilized by the concerned authorities of some of the countries engaged in drafting their new constitutions. The Centre itself, however, scrupulously avoids giving any opinions or making any value judgements, the endeavour being to be strictly factual and objective.

The CIDP receives very valuable assistance from the members of its network of national correspondents which now covers some 105 countries. The correspondents generally are senior officers of the staff of Parliaments. They are the key persons who keep the Centre informed of new publications, relevant documents and latest developments in the Parliaments of their respective countries; of the constitutional changes; of developments in electoral laws, holding of fresh elections and results thereof; etc. They help the Centre in the important matter of ensuring timely responses to Questionnaires for its comparative studies. Also, they publicize the CIDP activities and publications in their respective countries. The correspondents - the quantum of their contribution varying naturally - perform this onerous task on a voluntary basis. The Centre, of course, maintains close relations with them. Under a new practice started early this year, with a view to developing closer links and regular contacts between the Centre and its correspondents, the head of the CIDP writes to all correspondents a friendly letter twice a year - in January and July - to keep them contemporaneously informed of the activities of the CIDP at the Union headquarters and to enable them to make ever more fruitful contributions to enriching the CIDP documentation folders and files and helping in the other activities in the service of Parliaments and parliamentarians the world over. The correspondents are requested similarly to write twice a year - in February and August - to keep the CIDP informed of the activities and developments in their Parliaments. On its part, the CIDP is at the disposal of its correspondents with all its modest resources in terms of information, documentation, publications etc.

Research and Publications

From the material it collects, the CIDP extracts the most important information and disseminates it through its publications. Thus, it prepares a comprehensive comparative study on the composition, organization and functioning of Parliaments. The study was first published in 1962 in English and French. A revised edition came out in 1966-67. The most recent edition of this work, entitled Parliaments of the World : A Reference Compendium, was published in 1976. It analysed information provided by 56 Parliaments, in response to an extensive

international enquiry conducted by the Centre in 1973-1974, in a series of 70 tables preceded by introductory texts. The only work of its kind, it was very well received in parliamentary and academic circles and has become one of the most prestigious publications of the CIDP. The CIDP is currently engaged in preparation of a new comparative study on the Parliaments of the World which is expected to be released in 1985. In accordance with the research design approved by the Consultative Committee of Experts, the new study will be based on a different perspective and approach and on fresh materials being collected from Parliaments of the world through a Questionnaire which has been addressed to some 139 Parliaments. The Study will have nearly 50 chapters with as many comparative tables and may run into approximately 1.000 pages in print.

The CIDP's annual Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments which has been in increasing demand, reports on all the legislative elections held from July 1 of one year to June 30 of the following year. Each of the chapters on a specific country outlines the electoral system and gives the statistical results of voting in the latest election and the distribution of seats in Parliament. The first section of each Chronicle, called "Parliamentary Developments", summarizes the changes which have occurred in the organization, composition, methods of operation and powers of Parliaments during the year covered, and has recently been enlarged in an effort to concurrently update the information contained in Parliaments of the World.

The World-Wide Bibliography on Parliaments, was published by the CIDP in 1978 with the aim of providing a useful quick-reference tool in the field of existing literature on national legislatures. This bibliography - a country-by-country list of more than 4,600 works followed by a detailed classified index and author index - is meant to facilitate research into all aspects of parliamentary life. A supplement to the Bibliography was issued in 1980. It covered works published during 1977-1979 and contained about 2,850 entries. Another supplementary volume is currently under preparation. It will cover titles issued during the years 1980-1982 and is scheduled to be published by the end of the year (1983).

Another CIDP publication, the World Directory of Parliaments, contains bilingual loose-leaf data sheets on each Parliament (or House) existing in the world's independent countries, enumerating basic characteristics (name and address of the assembly, number of members and term of office, date of last general elections) related to the legislature concerned. It furthermore takes account, as from 1980, of the data given in the CIDP's former "Directory for Exchange and Communication of Parliamentary Information", whose purpose was to facilitate direct contacts between information services. The 1983 edition of this reference booklet - which is updated annually - contains entries on 139 Parliaments.

Some of the other ad hoc studies conducted by the CIDP during the last few years have been:

(i) Organisation of the Staff of Parliaments (in collaboration with the ASGP)

(ii) Responsibilities of MPs towards the Electorate.

(iii) Forms and methods of voters' participation in the Legislative Process.

Studies prepared by the CIDP for the symposia have included:

(i) The Member of Parliament: his requirements for information in the modern world (Synthesis of an international enquiry on the subject)

(ii) Study of the Provisions for the information of M.P.s concerning the activities of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies (in co-operation with the UN).

Use of Computers in the Information Services of Parliaments is a new research project taken in hand by the CIDP in co-operation with the Inter-Governmental Bureau of Informatics (IBI), Rome early in 1983. Based on an international enquiry and the responses to a comprehensive and structured Questionnaire addressed to 139 Parliaments, the results will be published in the form of a Report in 1984.

International Symposia and Meetings

From time to time, the CIDP serves as a forum for debates and organizes international gatherings devoted to the study of current parliamentary problems. The meetings and symposia organized by the CIDP are attended by members of Parliament, Secretaries-General Clerks of Parliaments, servants, scholars and specialists in the fields concerned. A substantial part of the interest in the debates is derived from the fact that they provide an excellent opportunity for a broad confrontation of opinion and approaches from different angles to key problems of functioning of Parliaments. A survey of one of the CIDP's international symposia had this to say:

> "The Symposium ... was a good indication of the usefulness of bringing together men whose intellectual approach differs not only because they belong to different ideological systems but also because their training, like their chief preoccupations, has developed along quite distinct lines. It makes possible this extensive confrontation of arguments, based on many conflicting approaches, whose value lies in spotlighting a specific problem from different angles so as to bring out its multiple facets. It was surely this conviction that led the administrators of the Union and of the CIDP ... to give a new dimension to the Organization's already extensive activities by means of these Symposia." (5)

Since its setting up in 1965, the CIDP has organized international symposia on the following themes of direct concern to all parliamentary circles:

- Present day problems of Parliament;
- Parliament and its means of contact with public opinion through the press, radio and television;

- The Member of Parliament: his requirements for information in the modern world;

- Who legislates in the modern world ? and

- Parliaments and the United Nations.

In all cases, the verbatim records of the symposia proceedings are published and made available to those interested.

From the view-point of the parliamentary libraries and librarians, it may be of special interest to know that the symposium on Information Requirements of Members organized by the CIDP in 1973 was said to have provided to them "international recognition"(6) and was considered "the watershed" in inter-parliamentary co-operation insofar as it recognized the parliamentarians' need for "more and more comparative information". (7) According to a survey of the symposium, it was to be "seen in the context of a virtually universal challenge to transmit, share and use each other's knowledge." (8)

An indirect outcome of this very CIDP symposium was the decision of the IPU to commission a special enquiry into the needs and practical steps to ensure effective co-operation between Parliaments in the field of external information, i.e. facts, data, documents and analyses concerning and originating in one country and required in another. The results of the enquiry recognized that the challenge was "to locate and then to transmit rapidly and accurately, pertinent existing information from one country to another in a useful form", so that parliamentarians had "an increasingly needed comparative basis for their decision-making". The recommendations made in the results of the enquiry, inter alia included:

(i) organized collection and exchange of documents of central importance obtained during tours by parliamentarians and parliamentary staff as members of parliamentary delegations or otherwise;

(ii) establishment of communication links between Parliaments and international organizations;

(iii) developing a comprehensive co-operative network of Parliamentary Libraries, Documentation and Research Services with each Parliamentary Library having close links with its counterparts in other national Parliaments;

(iv) use of diplomatic pouches and the most modern means of operational communication for prompt transfer of needed information and exchange of important publications, bibliographies indexes, legislative calendars etc. (9)

Inter-parliamentary co-operation in the field of information dissemination may take various forms. It may be bilateral between two Parliaments. It may be regional or based on religious, linguistic, cultural or other affinities or historical ties as in the case of the members of the Commonwealth of Nations or the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament; the International

Association of French Speaking Parliamentarians, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, Union of African Parliaments, Asian-Pacific Parliamentarians' Union, Latin American Parliament etc. - most of them associated with the Inter-Parliamentary Union with 'observer' status. Also, inter-parliamentary co-operation may be global as in the case of the Inter-Parliamentary Union itself and its International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this paper. Mention should be made of the close professional contacts at the functional level that the CIDP has always maintained with other international bodies devoted to library and information activities, for instance

- International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), particularly its Parliamentary Libraries Section,

- European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), particularly its Data Processing and Parliamentary Terminology Groups,

- Parliamentary Information and Reference Centre of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and

- Inter-Governmental Bureau of Informatics, particularly for conducting a joint project on informatics in Parliaments.

Assistance to Parliaments and Technical Co-operation

The CIDP is responsible for the implementation of the Union's two technical co-operation programmes for Parliaments. Under the first programme which was set in motion in 1972, large scale projects, financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are carried out. The aim of these projects is to assist the Parliaments of developing countries, particularly those of relatively recent growth, at their request, to improve their technical means and the infrastructure of their services and facilities and carry out their tasks more effectively in increasingly complex fields. This is sought to be achieved primarily through:

- study tours and in-service training of staff in the more advanced and experienced Parliaments;

- expert consultative missions to the Parliament concerned; and

- on-the-spot training courses given by experts of the CIDP or those deputed by the CIDP.

The United Republic of Cameroon, India, Uganda, Zambia and Algeria have thus far benefited from this programme. The Cameroon project resulted in the setting up of a documentation and study service within the Cameroon Parliament. Under the India project, 12 parliamentary officials were provided with study tours or training fellowships in different parliaments of the world. The Algerian project which is an ongoing one, is directed towards the setting up of a computerized legislative index service. To assist the Parliament of Uganda in its rehabilitation and recovery programme and in setting up a Library, Research and Information Service for its Members, a short visit in the nature of a need identification and project formulation mission was undertaken by the head of the CIDP in 1982.

The US$ 70,000 project has since been accepted by the UNDP and by the Ugandan Government and after formal approval in June, it is expected to get operational. In the case of Zambia, a sum of US$ 50,000 has been provided by the UNDP for the development and strengthening of its Library facilities.

Besides, several other countries - Sudan, Djibouti and Gabon among them - have expressed interest in benefiting from the technical co-operation programme and relevant steps are under discussion and correspondence at various stages. In Bangladesh, a project document was actually prepared after a short expert mission but could not be proceeded with due to the dissolution of Parliament and other internal developments. A project for the Parliament of Rwanda had to be similarly given up at an advanced stage.

The other programme which is a modest one and is financed by the Union's own budget, is that of information seminars on the working of the Union. These seminars enable small groups of parliamentary officials better to acquaint themselves, at the IPU Headquarters, with the work of the organization and with the working methods of other Parliaments and national parliamentary groups. Some 100 officials from 50 different Parliaments have so far participated in these two-week seminars begun in 1973 and organized annually, with their proceedings conducted either in English or French. By meeting together at these seminars, parliamentary officials from different countries are also able to compare problems and exchange experience through mutually rewarding discussions.

In conclusion, it may be said that though the CIDP is modest and small in terms of the space occupied and the number of staff members, it performs a useful and important role in strengthening parliamentary institutions through inter-parliamentary co-operation and dissemination of information. A plan of CIDP activities for the next few years is currently under the consideration of the governing bodies of the IPU and shall come up for approval at the next Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Seoul in October this year.

To what extent during the last 18 years of its life, has the CIDP been successful in achieving its foundational objectives ? This may be a question difficult to answer. It is never easy to quantify results of such endeavours. In any case, they cannot be measured in terms of any quick pay-off potentials or results. While, as always, much remains to be done, what has been achieved is considerable and a tribute to the abilities and farsightedness of the leadership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

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